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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a vision for a new unified arrangement for schools and teacher education programs in which pre-kindergarten through grade-12 schools and the professional development of teachers are intertwined to create learning communities. This vision's three basic and necessary characteristics are: (1) the direct participation of many more people than are now usually found in schools, such as teacher education students, teacher educators, various types of individuals providing help to students and other types of individuals providing professional support to teachers; (2) a differentiation of roles among all the participants; and (3) continuous learning among all participants regardless of their primary role in the operation. An exploration of the state of the school teacher education relationship describes the current reform period and its impact upon teacher education. A brief look at creating learning community schools notes the difficulties inherent in either starting from scratch to create schools or in gradually transforming existing schools. A final section describes efforts that are now underway at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University (Tennessee) and in the Metropolitan Nashville (Tennessee) Public Schools including an "invent-a-school" project and a cooperative program that combines the professional preparation of new teachers with their first full year of teaching. A Peabody College statement is appended: "Revisioning Learning: Toward a Peabody Perspective." (JB)

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Fantasies about Schools and Teacher Education Programs as Inclusive Learning Communities, and Ideas about Getting There from Here

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Paper Presented at the 13th Annual Seminar on Teacher Education of the International Society for Teacher Education

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Introduction

Educational dreamers, at least in some places where "professional education" is practiced, are describing visions of a new unified arrangement for schools and teacher education in which pre-K--12 schooling and the professional development of teachers are intertwined. These dreamers use terms and phrases such as *learning communities*, *continuous teacher learning*, *teacher empowerment*, *site-based management*, *total quality management*, *schools as client (student) driven educational service agencies*, and *schools as comprehensive service centers*. Their fantasy sees schools as communities in which all participants learn on the job and in which all activity is driven by the goal of student learning. There is no separation between teacher education and teacher employment because teachers are always learning, not only before they are personally responsible for children's learning but also throughout their teaching career. In this context, teachers never face student learning problems that cannot be solved; instead they face challenges for which they have not yet learned a solution or developed the skills to make a solution work.

This paper consists of four parts: (1) my perceptions of these educational dreamers' fantasy, (2) ideas about current relationships between the fantasy and the contemporary state of "innovative" reform efforts concerned with schools and teacher education, (3) suggestions about ways to make the fantasy a reality and some difficulties likely to be encountered, and (4) a brief report on a situation in which educators are trying to accomplish this dream. The paper focuses on schools and teacher education in the United States and lacks an international perspective because of my limited knowledge of parallel developments and ideas in other areas of the world. The paper is intended to stimulate reactions and contributions of additional information about international comparisons from seminar participants, as part of a *learning community* here at Comburg. It is a "thought piece," a description of eclectic ideas in the process of being developed; it has no references at this stage and no firm conclusions. Please react.

Perceptions of the Fantasy

The learning community schools envisioned by the educational dreamers mentioned above include at least three basic and necessary characteristics. The first of these is the *direct participation of many more people* than students, teachers, school administrators, and the traditional support staff of custodians, cafeteria workers, and the like who are now usually found in schools. Learning community schools also include teacher education students; teacher educators; anyone who can provide help to *students* beyond that provided by teachers (social workers, community agency employees, employers of students who work, health care providers, "big brothers" and "big sisters", parents and families of students, and so forth); and anyone who can provide assistance and support to *teachers* (librarians, community experts, local college professors and staff members, public media employees, suppliers of materials, equipment, information, and other resources).

A second basic characteristic is the *differentiation of roles* among all the participants. Everyone in the mix might do the work traditionally assigned to only one type of role player. In many versions of learning community schools, teachers are the most prominent decision-makers, but administrators sometimes decide among various teacher positions when there is no consensus or when the question being addressed is not important enough to involve a number of individuals. Parents, teachers, education students, experts from the community, and specialists on television teach lessons while the regular teacher prepares for future lessons. That preparation occurs on school time and might take place in the back of the room, in an office down the hall, at a local library or resource center, or by attending a class on a college campus. The key point concerning what the different people do is not defined by their pre-set roles but by what would produce the best learning for the students.

A third basic characteristic is *everyone is always learning* regardless of their primary role in the operation. Of course, some people are counted on to know more and possess more expertise in certain areas than others, but everyone is still learning. Teachers and all the other role-players are not expected to know how to deal with every problem, but they are expected to try to find out what to do and then apply what they learn.

Because learning community schools that combine school operations and teacher education assume everyone is continuously learning and roles are constantly being redefined, there is less expectation that school leaders, teachers, and teacher educators have to know answers and possess skills to solve problems a priori. Instead, identifying problems, searching for solutions, and experimenting with possible alternatives are all built into the learning community environment and spirit. Unlike in more traditional school settings, no one has to avoid problems until he or she has a solution; no one has to refrain from speaking out for fear of exposing what he or she does not already know. More importantly, the practical-based knowledge about what works with the students often possessed by experienced teachers has just as much status as the more research-based ideas of educational theorists and writers. Therefore, the spirit of the learning community is characterized by a belief that all participants, including the students, know things and are able to do things that are useful to accomplishing school goals, but, at the same time, none of the participants knows enough or is skilled enough to answer all the questions, solve all the problems, or dominate over the others.

In this context, everyone in learning community schools is "empowered" (if that is an accurate enough term) to be a full-fledged participant. Everyone teaches, everyone manages, everyone solves problems, everyone identifies and uncovers new knowledge and resources needed for the school to accomplish its purposes. The single goal is the best possible learning for the school's students; who does what to accomplish that goal is of little importance. So, *teacher empowerment*, *site-based management*, and the concepts embodied in *Total Quality Management* all occur naturally as a normal part of the process of getting the job done. No one has to *give* power to teachers. They have it because of what they know, the skills they possess, and their willingness to exercise the responsibilities that are already theirs. No one from a central authority has to award management responsibilities to the school "site," the learning community assumes the authority and exercises it. However, the central authority must stay out of the way--not an easy condition to achieve for school systems steeped in years of top-down modes of operation.

Because everyone in learning community schools is learning, mentoring and coaching are typical modes of teaching and learning rather than the types of teaching that presume a two-tiered type of learning in which teachers possess the knowledge or skills, learners do not, and an interaction between the two tiers that is teacher-dominant and student-passive. As everyone learns and everyone solves problems, everyone relies on each other for instructions and assistance.

The combination of a single focus on student learning and the belief that no one already possesses all the answers and solutions means that learning community schools are endeavors at problem solving, endeavors that seek and apply potential solutions to conditions that inhibit better learning. Because the best potential solutions might come from anywhere, inside or outside of the school and its community, knowledge, resources, and services are sought from anywhere. Volunteer parents with appropriate skills can be substitutes, local stores can be vendors, fast-food franchises can provide lunchtime food, parents can drive cars and vans for field trips, even local college faculty can teach once in a while.

In sum, the learning community school as seen by at least some educational dreamers can be described in words associated with the Total Quality Management concept. Students are the clients; their learning is the goal; teachers are the first line of service providers; everyone else, those inside the educational system and those outside but available to it, are support staff for the enterprise. There are noticeably fewer rules about what can and cannot be done to educate the students, more incentives to seek unique types of help and resources, a spirit of experimentation, and a freedom and security among teachers and teacher educators to try new things and to use their own best judgment.

The Current State of the School - Teacher Education Relationship

Currently, teaching and schooling in the United States are in a period of exciting reform and teacher education is part of the reform movement. Nearly all facets of schooling are under pressure to improve learning and, as a result, schools are trying new and different things. One aspect of the reform movement is efforts to create learning community schools and many of these efforts involve attempts to draw together educational research, teacher education, and the work done in schools.

In a paper I presented at this seminar last year, I described what I believe to be the current status of the relationship between the education of teachers and teacher work in schools in the United States. I described the situation as that of a transitional movement away from the traditional way of preparing teachers, which I called a *two-stages-and-a-bridge design*, to a learning community concept that includes teacher education and teacher work in schools as one all-encompassing endeavor (much like that described above). As background, I would like to repeat briefly in the next few paragraphs my view of that situation.

I see traditional education of teachers in the United States in terms of the *two-stages and a bridge* metaphor. Stage one is the pre-service, on-campus instruction (sometimes with practice) provided for teacher education students; and stage two involves the early years on the job in the "real" classroom. Firmly placed between the two stages is a pivotal connection, a bridge, which is called student teaching and/or, in recent times, an internship. In this conceptualization, the bridge is a transition that includes elements of the two stages. During that transition student and program priorities gradually shift from the "getting ready to teach" aspects of stage one to the "real teaching" of the newly employed teacher of stage two. Experiences associated with the bridge include "field-based" instruction, guided practice, and closely supervised trial and error experimentation.

Improvements in teacher education over the last decade or two have tended to focus to a great extent on the bridge, sometimes to the near neglect of at least some elements of both stage one and stage two, and have stressed how those in charge of stage one and stage two could work together better as partners to ensure a better transition between campus instruction and the life of a successful teacher. In essence, the improvements involve cooperation by the decision makers at both ends of the bridge and in the managing of the one-way flow of student-teachers from campus to classroom. Forming *partnerships* is the mark of being on the forefront of today's improvement in schools and teacher education.

Many of these partnerships attempt to ease the transition across the bridge by lengthening the bridge or by extending the entrance and exit approaches to the bridge. In some of these efforts, college faculty devote more energies to helping their students after they leave campus as they begin

their first job. In other efforts, classroom teachers and school system leaders assume more responsibility for student teaching and for helping college instructors remain up to date so they can provide more useful practical experiences for pre-student teaching future teachers.

This focus of attention on the bridge of student teaching or internship seems to be motivated by the facts that most teachers report that their own student teaching was the most significant experience in their teacher preparation and they rate the experience highly. In contrast, they often describe pre-student teaching professional studies in negative terms and characterize them as "too theoretical" or irrelevant to "real" teaching. Views of the other side of the bridge--the first year or two of teaching--are, typically, no better. Many teachers and teacher educators characterize the real world of teaching in terms of poor working conditions, inadequate classroom supplies and resources, and lack of respect. Frequently, teacher educators characterize real classrooms as places to be avoided by student teachers in favor of carefully selected "ideal" settings where student teachers have a good chance to succeed, to have a pleasant experience, and to develop a positive perspective about teaching.

In the context of this *two-stages-plus-a-bridge* view of teacher preparation, education reformers, those in teacher education and those in the schools, have undertaken numerous efforts to reform the way teachers are prepared. But, in doing so, their ideas seem to be limited by the bridge metaphor as well as by two other similarly restricting conceptualizations: (1) that of the nature of teaching, which many see as a craft to be learned by artisans practicing under the guidance of masters; and (2) that of the school, which they characterize as a facility of production, the products of which are knowledgeable and skilled students.

Because of the restrictions of these three metaphors--*the bridge, teaching as craft, and schools as facilities of production*-- recent partnerships between colleges and schools that are considered to be successful at improving the process of teacher preparation have, for the most part, rearranged, reorganized, and reformed the student teaching experience--the bridge--and, at times, have also improved the approaches at both ends of the bridge by revising and expanding pre-student teaching coursework and field experiences, by adding trained mentors for new teachers,

and by improving inservice training. To the extent they do this well, they do, in fact, improve teacher preparation; but the results, of necessity, are limited. They are limited primarily because the key actors in the reform process see themselves as playing two traditionally different roles, different roles from which they form partnerships with each other. They form partnerships rather than *combine their roles* into one.

As I mentioned last year, I believe even these good efforts at reform in teacher education are not adequate for the broader changes that need to be made in teacher education and in teaching as a whole. Instead they are only first steps. The changes that are needed are of a different order. They need to be changes in the way educators think about teacher education, teachers, and schools. They need to be changes away from the ideas of *student teaching as bridge, teachers as artisan, and schools as facilities for production.* They need to move beyond partnerships.

In essence, for teacher education and school reform to advance beyond partnerships in the years ahead, the following re-conceptualizations must occur.

(1) *Teaching* must be seen as an ever-changing inquiring, problem-solving, scholarly endeavor conducted by intelligent, knowledgeable, analytical, reflective-thinking, decisive, and effective-managing individuals who also care deeply about their students and about what they do to and for them; and who see their task as that of making children into well informed, intelligent, skilled, and sensitive human beings. Teaching must be thought of as much more than a craft passed on from master to artisan.

(2) *Schools* must be seen as learning communities, as places of inquiry, reflection, analysis, knowing, deciding, and action; places where everyone is learning, as described earlier.

(3) The *bridge* must be dismantled and the "gap" that it has spanned for so many years must be filled in so that a contiguous landform connects pre-service teacher education with the entire professional life for all teachers.

(4) *Partnerships* between teacher educators and teachers in schools must be transcended in favor of composite roles that meld the learning and work of teachers into one complex, multi-faceted, persistent professional role, not unlike Geoffrey Chaucer's teacher in Canterbury Tales, who would gladly learn as well as gladly teach.

Getting There from Here

There seems to be at least two viable approaches to creating learning community schools that combine the work of schools and teacher education: (1) inventing such schools "from scratch" --from an abstract idea to a reality--by planning, designing, and establishing a new school according to learning community principles; and (2) developing such schools gradually a by selecting existing schools and their school communities and carefully modifying them step-by-step into learning communities. The two approaches are labeled in the remainder of this paper as the *invent-a-school approach* and the *gradual approach.* Regardless of approach, however, the task of developing learning community schools will be difficult to say the least. As far as I know, no such school has been created to date, at least not in the United States.

The *invent-a-school* approach requires tremendous commitment, energy, and skill at the start because much must be accomplished before any real learning community actually takes form. Basic principles must be formulated and ascribed to, designs must be sketched and evaluated, underlying values and premises must be identified and embraced, individuals of many types and in many positions who care about schools and the education of children must be convinced. Then, the learning community participants must be identified and commissioned, and the actual work of creating a new, radically different school begun. Even after the school opens much will need to be modified, adjusted, and refined. Only continuous effort will enable the new enterprise to approach the learning community ideal.

The *gradual approach* is more an effort at transformation than invention. It starts with the application of learning community principles to an existing school. Here too, principles must be formulated, designs sketched, and so forth; but the application of the principles and the implementation of the design can be undertaken incrementally and more subtly. Changes from the

old school setting to the new environment can be accomplished at a regulated pace with less notice and probably with less threat the those involved.

Regardless of which approach is used, however, the task will be difficult. Creating a learning community school that incorporated both the education of pre-K--12 students and the education of teachers is a radical departure from that which now exists in both contemporary schools and teacher education programs, even those considered to be on the forefront of the education reform movement. Because the endeavor is such a departure, it confronts and is confounded by all the obstacles typically raised in the face of any significant change. Human beings tend to like the security of the familiar, follow routines without giving them much thought, and experience discomfort when those routines do not fit a new situation. Change requires time and effort, costs money, threatens those in control, and challenges those involved. Paths in unrecognizable territory lead to "dead ends," errors, and failure and; these, in turn, result in embarrassment and criticism.

In short, trying to create learning community schools is a very risky enterprise. Those who take up the challenge must believe that their effort is worth the costs and that it will eventually succeed. They must also be convinced that it will improve the learning of the students for who they are responsible.

Attempts

A number of educators at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University and in the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools in Nashville, Tennessee (U.S.A.) are attempting to create learning community schools by using both of the approaches mentioned above.* The attempts overlap and each effort is in its early stages. Both are described below.

* Peabody College is a professional school of education and human development, one of the ten academic units of Vanderbilt University. Both Peabody College and Vanderbilt University are private institutions. Peabody College sees its missions as follows: (1) to educate teachers and other leaders who work in education and human service settings; (2) to develop model programs for the preparation of people who plan to work in these professions; and (3) to conduct research related to the areas of investigation that lead to the improvement of education and human services policy and services.

The Invent-a-School Effort

In the spring of 1991, several Peabody College faculty designed a semester-long seminar for their college colleagues for the purpose of identifying the basic principles, commitments, and assumptions that would underlie and guide their version of an ideal pre-K--12 school. All of the college's approximately 90 faculty were invited to participate and between 30 and 40 did so rather regularly. The seminar occurred during the autumn of 1991 and focused heavily on designing a prototype of a learning community school.

The learning community school concept that the faculty developed is based in at least two prior assumptions. The first of those assumptions is that there are so many things wrong with American pre-K--12 schooling that incremental improvement will not make the changes that are necessary and will not do so nearly fast enough. The second assumption is that change in organizations (as well as change in general) is extremely difficult to produce when the participants are asked to envision how things could be radically different. The difficulty in this situation is that any envisioning of a radically different setting by participants in an organization is severely hampered by the fact that those trying to envision what could be so different have to begin intellectually with the ideas that embody the present state of that organization.

The document developed by the seminar is called *Revisioning Learning: Toward a Peabody Perspective* (copy attached). Once the document was in print, the faculty set out to accomplish two "second steps": (1) establish a mechanism for outside educators and school leaders to critique the document so it could be rewritten with broader input and (2) seek funding and authorization so a school that would follow the rewritten document's basic tenets could be developed. The Metropolitan Nashville Public School system (the local city school system) agreed to participate with the College faculty on an implementation plan, and the College and the school system jointly sought federal government funds to get started. A rather extensive proposal was developed for the planning stage of the to-be-invented school and over a million dollars per year for multiple years was requested in a national competition for government support, with matching private financing also to be secured. The government announced in summer 1992 that it would not

fund the project, but both the College and the school system pledged to move ahead anyway and to seek the needed funds elsewhere.

Since summer 1992, the primary activities of the invent-a-school effort have taken the form of pursuing several specific elements of the original plan rather than moving ahead broadly. This seems to have occurred because funding limits have stalled much of the planned large-scale movement, and because the idea of developing a learning community school stimulated intense interest in several smaller projects that could be pursued quickly and that have direct impact on students and teachers. A number of these smaller projects have drawn college faculty, college teacher education students, and school-based educators more closely together and have developed an energy of their own.

The joint college-school system projects that have occurred during the 1992-93 academic year include the following:

(1) The College has designed and received approval for a $14.5 million renovation of a campus building to house the College's teacher education faculty and program, its Learning Technology Center, a demonstration pre-K--12 electronic classroom of the future and a similar college-level classroom.

(2) College research projects in language arts, mathematics, student competency assessment, approaches to teaching students of wide ranges of ability in the same class, and a number of special education initiatives have been implemented in the schools.

(3) A college-based, experimental, technological approach to teaching higher order thinking skills to middle school students has been expanded to more school system classrooms.

(4) University scientists are paired with classroom teachers to serve as resource teachers and to help them improve their science instruction.

(5) An experimental mentor training program for experienced teachers has gradually expanded.

Other endeavors, including several that are outside of the invent-a-school apparatus, are described in the attached newsletter.

So many immediate productive joint activities between the College and the local schools have developed during 1992-93 that nearly every college faculty member involved in the 1991 seminar is now working with pre-K--12 teachers in schools. In fact, these joint college-schools projects have sidetracked the planned fundraising efforts for the comprehensive planning grant. Although a few faculty and school people have devoted energies throughout the school year to planning a full-scale design for learning community schools, their progress has been limited to date.

The Gradual Effort

For several years before the idea of a developing prototype learning community school emerged at Peabody College, several of the college's faculty and the staffs of three Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools developed a cooperative program that combined the professional preparation of new teachers with their first full year of teaching. That plan, called the Peabody-Vanderbilt Internship/Induction Program was intended to improve both the education of new teachers and the first years of classroom experience of newly employed teachers. It was developed primarily because there has been a demand in recent years in the United States for teacher education programs that are more strenuous intellectually and more open to individuals who have previously received arts and science degrees without professional education training. Although the Internship/Induction Program is somewhat similar to the efforts described earlier in this paper as those that attempt to "build a better bridge," the program actually began as a means to change how teachers were prepared and inducted into the teaching profession.

The Internship/Induction Program prepares graduates of other colleges, often individuals who have already spent a significant number of years in other careers to become teachers. It includes particularly high academic entrance standards for participants, a strong analytical approach to teacher education, highly concentrated study, a full year of classroom teaching during nine months of the thirteen to fifteen month experience, the receiving of a master's degree, and the

designation of the year-long experience as the participants' first-year of teaching. This latter characteristic means that when participants are employed in the state of Tennessee (where the program operates), they are employed as second-year teachers for pay and tenure purposes.

Each year approximately twelve to fourteen individuals participate as interns (probably twenty for 1993-94) and prepare for employment as classroom teachers at grades kindergarten through 12. They study four courses during a summer session on the college campus before they are assigned to a mentor teacher and a classroom. As the school year begins, each intern is paired one-to-one with his or her trained mentor teacher and, during the autumn part of the school year, co-teaches in various formats with that mentor teacher. During the spring-half of the school year, the interns teach their own classes but within shouting distance of the mentor teacher. Close supervision and evaluation are provided by mentor teachers, university supervisors, and the school principal.

By the end of the 1990-91 school year, Internship/Induction participants realized that several especially unusual circumstances had developed that provided for an opportunity for the project to evolve into something much more than that which was originally envisioned. Those circumstances included the following examples:

(1) The presence of interns in the three schools freed teachers (including the interns) to study and pursue other professional work on school time.

(2) The training that mentor teachers received so they could coach their interns could be used to help other teachers and to improve the mentor's own teaching.

(3) The blurring of role differentiation that occurred in each school setting helped break down barriers that fixed roles in the past had created.

(4) Mentor teachers and a number of regular teachers developed new expertise and updated their professional knowledge.

(5) Mentors and their teacher colleagues began to make more of the professional decisions in their schools.

(6) The university connection provided the schools with resources and expertise that could be called upon when needed.

Then in the late spring of 1992, the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools hired Richard Benjamin as its new superintendent, a man who is committed to the concept of learning community schools and to college-schools collaboration. Dr. Benjamin, in his initial meeting with the co-directors of the Internship/Induction Program, authorized the program participants to make all professional decisions concerning the program, endorsed the suggestion that the three schools move quickly toward learning communities as seen by the program participants, and stated explicitly that decisions arrived at by the teacher decision-makers of the three schools would need no further authorization from school officials above the school-building level.

Because of the professional evolution that had taken place since the start of the Internship/Induction Program and because of this unique level of administrative support and encouragement, in August 1992, the teachers of the Internship/Induction Program broadened their goals and visions and formed the Vanderbilt University-Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools Education Professions Collaborative. That Collaborative, in a sense, sits on top of the continuing Internship/Induction Program. While the Internship/Induction Program continues to evolve a new way of educating teachers, The Collaborative seeks to gradually evolve a new school environment for all. That environment is seen as a place where all participants are continuously learning and where all activity is focused on a single goal of improving the learning of the students who attend the three schools.

I believe that this evolving school environment is much like the learning community school envisioned by the educational dreamers described at the start of this paper, and there are many specific instances of Collaborative activities that illustrate why I hold this belief. But, instead of writing about the many specific successes and difficulties that have occurred in The Collaborative schools this school year, I will stop writing at this point and defer accounts of the specifics to our group discussion. However, I want to conclude this fourth part of my paper by saying that Peabody College, Vanderbilt University and the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools are well on their way to remarkable success at developing joint school-teacher education learning communities. They are doing so by pursuing a number of endeavors that incorporate both the invent-a-school

and the gradual approaches to developing learning community schools. In fact, both approaches overlap so much, that they are likely to blend into one multi-faceted endeavor in the years ahead. Only time will tell if my enthusiasm is justified.

REVISIONING LEARNING: TOWARD A PEABODY PERSPECTIVE

I. Commitments

Our commitment is to:

- Identify principles for guiding the design of schools that help all students develop their confidence and abilities to think, learn, understand, communicate, and solve the kinds of scientific, social, and ethical problems necessary for effective citizenship and productive work in the twenty-first century.

- Create a model for educational improvement that fosters continual learning for teachers, parents and other community members as well as for students.

- Provide a design that is applicable to schools throughout the nation rather than applicable only to a small number of special cases.

We focus on these three goals simultaneously because (1) all students must be prepared for lifelong learning; (2) schools that do not foster thinking by their professionals cannot foster thinking in their students; and (3) the challenge of dramatically improving education in the United States is a problem for nearly every school in the nation. The third point is especially important. It can be advantageous to see lighthouse schools in operation, but it is also clear from the history of educational reform that the ideas from these schools often fail to transfer to other settings--even those that are just down the street. It is our belief that the best, and possibly only, way to deal with the issue of broad-scale reform is to face the issue directly. Therefore, we emphasize principles for systematic restructuring that should be applicable to the nation as a whole.

II. Principles

Our "Peabody Principles" provide guidelines for designing learning communities that involve new conceptions of the nature of teaching and learning and new roles for teachers, students, parents, administrators and community members. We focus on principles for designing learning communities rather than on a specific design because we recognize that specifics must be tailored to individual settings.

The Peabody Principles allow flexible adaptation to local conditions while also providing a clear direction for improvement that is very different from the status quo. The principles are based on a vision of collaborative learning communities rather than solely on schools as the center of learning. The communities have clear goals and well-defined mechanisms for monitoring progress, and they are designed to be responsive to changing needs and standards. Each community's goals are coordinated with what is taught (curriculum), how it is taught (instruction), and how progress is measured (assessment).

Key aspects of each learning community include an emphasis on exceptionally high standards; on collaborative problem solving by teachers, students, parents, administrators and community members in order to set and meet these standards; and on ongoing professional developments as a primary mechanism for achieving excellence. Six perspectives on Peabody's principles for designing learning communities are discussed below.

1. The Curriculum:

- Addresses basic competencies in English, mathematics, science, history, geography and the arts, and places special emphasis on helping students use their knowledge of these areas to think and communicate effectively about important issues.

- Is closely coordinated with the instruction, assessment and professional development.

- Is derived from and designed to provide support for authentic tasks involving inquiry, problem solving, decision making and communication.

- Is organized around challenging, conceptually rich projects that provide opportunities for sustained thinking about important issues in science, mathematics, social studies and other areas; it is not organized around texts that emphasize breadth of factual coverage with little depth.

- Helps students integrate knowledge from a variety of disciplines rather than learn each one as an isolated subject.

- Provides opportunities for teachers to help students acquire specific sets of knowledge and skills that become relevant in the context of more global projects. In short, the curriculum proceeds from the general to the specific--in the opposite direction of most direction of most existing curricula.

- Makes use of multi-media technologies to create challenging problem solving environments that engage students, and to provide powerful technological tools that help students analyze and communicate important ideas and become producers of knowledge.

2. The Instruction:

- Is based on a model of teachers as coaches who work collaboratively with one another and with students, parents and other community member to set goals, monitor progress, and find and test strategies for helping their students achieve excellence.

- Requires teachers who are committed to the idea that even the youngest and least experienced students are capable of complex and creative thinking and that their primary role is not to "deliver instruction" but, instead, to listen to students' ideas and use them as opportunities for guided learning.

- Requires teachers who help students become producers of knowledge rather than only consumers; they give students multiple opportunities for roles that permit increased responsibilities for knowledge production.

- Requires teachers who encourage students to initiate and participate in community-based projects that take place outside of school.

- Requires teachers who use computer and multi-media technologies that help them change their roles from "dispensers of information" to managers and coaches of active student learning.

3. Assessments of Student Learning:

- Serve the dual purposes of (a) ensuring accountability to state and national standards (summative assessment), and (b) functioning as integral parts of the learning process by being linked to the curriculum and providing timely feedback on progress (formative assessment).

- Focus primarily on thinking and the contextual application of skills and concepts rather than on the ability to reproduce facts or perform isolated sets of skills.

- Place special emphasis on the importance of self-assessment and subsequent goal setting; students and teachers are provided with multiple opportunities to revisit problem environments and try again.

- Are based on a model in which teachers, parents, students, and other community members help define assessments that fulfill local goals and that reflect a commitment to state and national goals and standards.

- Are enhanced by several types of technologies such as computers that help diagnose areas of strength and weakness, and teleconferencing technologies that allow one to create intrinsically interesting public "challenge" arenas.

4. Professional development:

- Is grounded on the elevated conception of teaching that is embedded in the overall set of design principles for the school and for student learning.

- Is facilitated in an environment rich with information about student learning that informs educators, parents and children themselves, and where the needs for teacher and administrator learning are identified by matching the goals for student learning with what students know and are able to do in any given school or learning situation.

- Is fostered because teachers and administrators recognize that they are responsible for facilitating the learning of other educators, as well as the learning of students and parents.

- Is ongoing because opportunities and requirements for learning are embedded in the experiences of teaching, decision making, and working with parents and colleagues.

- Includes career opportunities for teachers and administrators that permit increased responsibilities for knowledge production for themselves and others.

- Is rooted in opportunities for teachers to innovate, collaborate, study and reflect on their practice in both the school and with other interested parties, including universities.

- Is encouraged by intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for seeking and using new knowledge to improve student learning.

- Is facilitated by knowledge and expertise that is readily accessible within each school and, through on-line telecommunications technology, from other schools, universities, district offices and state agencies.

5. School Organization and Decisionmaking

- Is structured by the learning and teaching strategies that are used rather than vice versa.

- Is the product of an information-rich school environment rather than formalized rules and standard operating procedures.

- Is based on the view that classroom teachers are key ingredients in any attempt to dramatically improve education in this country.

- Is based on a model in which teachers and other personnel function as a system that works collaboratively to solve problems.

- Is based on the view that the primary role of administrators is to help teachers teach and students learn.

- Is based on the view that leadership should be diffused throughout the learning community in accordance with the motivation and expertise of stakeholders.

- Is based on a model in which processes must exist that allow parents to voice concerns and proposals both collectively and individually, especially with respect to goal setting and the assessment of progress in meeting these goals.

6. Links Among Schools, Families and Communities

- Ensure that schools are community resources that are united by a commitment to common and well publicized principles and are managed in collaboration with parents, teachers, students, businesses and other members of the community.

- Ensure that schools reflect that distinctive features of their local setting while also remaining responsive to and shaping standards at state and national levels.

- Ensure that school walls do not define the boundaries of students' learning opportunities; instead, the local environment, community organizations and businesses are all viewed as sites for learning core subjects in meaningful ways.

- Ensure that educators are committed to and capable of engaging parents and other care givers in their children's cognitive and social development.
- Ensure that each child within the school has an advocate whose responsibilities include increasing the child's support for learning from outside the school.
- Ensure that health and social services are available that will enhance children's capacity and motivation to learn.
- Are fostered by technologies for managing and sharing information that help teachers and students save time and remain connected to parents and other professionals throughout the country and the world.